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ABSTRACT

The urgent need for an effective performance-based assessment tool that can make the connection between effective teaching and student learning has spurred action by expert educators. The Teacher Work Sample Methodology (TWSM) is a quality assurance system that can assess what students learn, how well they learn it, progress they make in their individual learning, and how students who are not making progress can be helped. The TWSM can link teacher effectiveness and teacher preparation to student learning. Oklahoma educational leaders are in the process of using the Oklahoma TWS (OKTWS) as one of its three Oklahoma Teacher Enhancement Program (OTEP) assessment components to be used with first year teachers to make a close connection between teacher preparation and the impact the beginning teacher has on student achievement in the classroom. The OKTWS offers a teacher-made, multi-week teaching unit. The TWS was chosen by the Title II OTEP because it is the most authentic assessment currently available to measure teacher ability to impact student classroom learning, not only according to NCATE standards, but also to Oklahoma's 15 teaching competencies. The OKTWS prompt consists of: the prompt (which provides instructions and explanation on completing the six OKTWS factors) and the rubric, which includes a checklist section and various demonstration components. (SM)

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The TWSM: An Essential Component in the Assessment
of Teacher Performance and Student Learning

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The TWSM: An Essential Component in the Assessment of Teacher Performance and Student Learning

Ever since A Nation at Risk was published, demands for quality teachers have ensued. Educators, legislators, teacher organizations, school boards, and business leaders have embarked on national meetings regarding how to train quality teachers, what is a quality teacher, and how do we assess quality teaching. National standards and/or assessments have been outlined by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS), the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCTAF), the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), and the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC).

NCTAF (1996) stated "teachers must go beyond dispensing information, giving a test, and assigning a grade" (p. 8). Teachers must be very knowledgeable about their subject area, understand students to create meaningful learning experiences, and meet the diverse needs of the individual students in the classroom. Understanding this concept, NBPTS has set standards and created assessments in order to determine teacher quality on a national level. NBPTS has been the most successful and influential organization to implement teaching standards that mark teacher quality, but NBPTS does not measure student achievement and its relationship to teacher effectiveness. Therefore, we must realize that "the development of standards alone cannot ensure the success of school reform" (Holbein, 1998, p. 560). To try and improve student achievement in the classroom, "pressure has mounted from state and federal lawmakers in recent years to hold higher education teacher training programs accountable for the quality of their graduates" (Dilworth, 2000). President Bush's plan, "No Child Left Behind," calls for

performance based assessment, subject area and professional education exams, and no out-of-field teaching assignments. The belief is that quality classroom teachers will result in student achievement. The first step by the United States Department of Education to hold higher education accountable has resulted in the Title II Report Card requiring each state to report the pass rates on teacher assessments for all program completers from a state higher education institution teacher education program and a comparison between their institutions statewide.

The call for accountability does not stop with the Title II Report Card. NCATE has set rigorous standards “and expect colleges to demonstrate that teacher candidates are gaining the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to have a positive impact on P-12 student learning” (Mitchell, 2001, p. 4). Based upon this evidence, teacher education programs will be held accountable for the quality of their graduates. These graduates will have worked through a performance based education program, subject area testing, and a portfolio that represents their competence and skill as a reflective, learning, beginning educator, as outlined by their higher education institution’s teacher preparation program. However, this assessment process does not measure student achievement while the student teacher is in the classroom, and by 2003, NCATE accredited programs must provide evidence that their education graduates, who are in their first year of teaching, are impacting student learning in their own classrooms. Many education organizations have produced standards and/or assessments to measure excellence in teaching, and performance examinations to be used in participating INTASC states are in development; however, an assessment tool that adequately measures these standards for teacher preparation and links them to student achievement does not exist. The need for a

performance based assessment tool that can be used to not only measure teacher quality, but also to link student achievement to teacher quality is immediate if higher education institutions and public school systems are to adhere to the demands of their own credentialing organizations and to the federal government.

The urgency and need for an effective performance based assessment tool that can make the connection between effective teaching and student learning is understood and has spurred action by expert educators. Schalock, Schalock, and Myton (1999) presented the Teacher Work Sample Methodology (TWSM) as a quality assurance system that can assess “what students learn, how well they are to learn it, the progress each student is making in his or her learning , and how each student who is not making the progress can be helped to do so” (p. 1.9). It is being used by Oregon as a “continued requirement...for initial licensure of teachers...and [a] recent addition as a requirement for continuing licensure” in the 1999 redesign of education standards in Oregon (Schalock, Schalock, & Myton, 1999, p. 1.6). The promise the TWSM makes in linking not only teacher effectiveness but also teacher preparation to student learning has launched more educational institutions to develop a teacher work sample that will meet their program needs.

A Title II Grant Consortium, the Renaissance Partnership for Improving Teacher Quality directed by Roger Pankratz, is piloting the Teacher Work Sample Methodology (TWSM) with student teachers from ten different higher education teacher programs in nine different states in an effort to document the relational evidence of teacher performance and student learning. Emporia State University’s teacher preparation program, initiated by Dr. Jerry Long and Dr. William Samuelson, is a part of the

Renaissance group but has adapted the Teacher Work Sample (TWS) to meet the needs of its teacher preparation program in the state of Kansas. Oklahoma's educational leaders have studied the work of the Renaissance and Emporia State University and are in the process of using the Oklahoma TWS (OKTWS) as one of the three OTEP assessment components (the other two being the portfolio and teacher observations) to be used with first year teachers in order to make as close a connection as possible between teacher preparation and the impact the teaching program graduate has on student achievement in his/her own classroom.

Is the TWS the assessment tool that can link teacher preparation and performance to student learning? Schalock believes "teacher work samples of the kind now being used...provide at least a start toward obtaining evidence on the effectiveness of teachers...and a quality assurance system that holds student learning as its core" (2000, p. 1.6). Pankratz states "the work sample methodology provides direct evidence of a teacher candidate's effect on student learning in a relatively short time period and clearly connects the elements of standards-based teaching and learning" (in paper presented at 2000 AACTE Conference, p. 37). The TWS has been chosen by the Title II Oklahoma Teacher Enhancement Program (OTEP) because it is the most authentic assessment currently available to measure the teacher's ability to impact student learning in the classroom not only according to the NCATE standards, but also to Oklahoma's fifteen teaching competencies.

The OKTWS prompt is composed of two sections: the prompt and rubric.

The prompt provides instructions and explanation on completing the six Factors of the OKTWS: Contextual Information, Unit Learning Goals, Assessment Plan, Instructional Design, Analysis of Learning, and Reflections on Teaching and Learning. The information and reflection required by the OKTWS Factors are responsive of Oklahoma's fifteen teaching competencies as well as the NCATE standards and requires teachers to utilize the Oklahoma's Priority Academic Student Skills goals and objectives in their work sample.

The OKTWS is composed of a teacher-made, multi-week teaching unit. The teacher works through the procedural steps for conceptualizing and implementing a teaching unit based upon students' learning needs and established standards, gives a pre and post assessment from which learning gains for all students are analyzed. The teacher summarizes, interprets, and reflects on each step of the teaching process and analyzes student growth in comparison to where students were when the unit began and where they are at the end of the teaching unit.

The second part of the work sample is the rubric. The rubric has two parts: a checklist section to designate what should be included in each Factor and a varied number of demonstration components. The demonstration components are evaluated on three performance levels: Standard Not Met, Standard Partially Met, and Standard Met. These performance levels relate in detail what teachers should be demonstrating within that Factor. Teachers demonstrate their level of performance through the information and the reflections they are asked to provide.

For example, in the Contextual Information Factor 1, a checklist shows teachers that within their reflections of this section, they should include the number of students they have, their ethnic, cultural, and gender make-up, socio-economic status, classroom environment, community environment, students with special needs, and the developmental characteristics of students. This information is then used in the teacher's discussion of her students' learning needs, modifications needed, instructional decisions, and other learning considerations. The contextual environment provided by the teacher is taken into consideration when scoring the work sample.

The teacher works through the teacher work sample as she works through the teaching unit. Goals for the unit are established and explained in Factor 2: Unit Learning Goals. The formative and summative assessments are designed and related to the unit in Factor 3: Assessment Plan. Factor 4: Instructional Design involves the development and implementation of the Unit. Factor Five: Analysis of Learning focuses upon the presentation of the pre and post-test scores of students and the teacher's discussion of their learning gains. Although a display of positive learning gains by the students is the goal of the teacher, it sometimes does not happen. Therefore, the importance of this component lies in the teacher's analysis of the scores and the relationship they have to instructional methods used and the classroom context. If students do poorly on a particular question, the teacher addresses this issue. We know many reasons could exist for this scenario, but how does the teacher explain it using the classroom's contextual information and his or her own knowledge of teaching? Where and when do modifications need to be made?

These are the questions teachers need to ask as they teach, and these are the questions teachers need to be able to answer. If by using the work sample these teachers can make a direct connection to what they know about pedagogy and the teaching skills they learned in teacher preparation and how to implement this information to benefit the learning of their students, then the link between teacher preparation and student learning has been made.

Resources

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